

A Preliminary Independent Functional Review of the land-use and development Planning System in Western Australia; with proposals for enhanced future relevance and management.

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Responding to the challenge of rapid change-

The State is today confronting massive change in social living circumstances with advancing technology affecting every aspect of life, as well as forecast substantial increase in urban population.

Those changes are having dramatic effects on both social and services infrastructure and alter the nature of supply in many unforeseeable ways. They demand a far more innovative, flexible, responsive and professional planning management and delivery system across the public sector than WA has been familiar with.

Nowhere is this more crucial than in urban land-use and the creation of relevant future living environments for people, that will be increasingly variable in both technically feasible function, and form.

That creation has hitherto been managed in WA for small slowly-changing urban areas, through elaborate bureaucratic controls by a Planning system headed by a Planning Commission (WAPC) executively supported by a Department of Planning (DoP).

However, that model for a wide variety of reasons is now outdated, and will not in future be appropriate to either the accelerating pace, widening dynamics of demand or feasible quality of outcomes.

Conceptual and practical realisation of creative urban development at International City scale is now a complex professional team-activity that must also involve interactive participation with the client-users. Relevance, innovation and quality of outcomes simply cannot be achieved or assured by didactic remote-control disconnected from people and development delivery systems, - yet that is inherently characteristic of the present planning system.-

Communities must be developed, strengthened, and creative visions negotiated into built-reality to provide essential local social identity and stability for people – who are now living frenetically complex lives in a combined multi-resourced physical and often psychologically ‘virtual’ environment.

Critical overview of the current system in operation.-

The core problems that must be addressed include -

1. Extensive evidence of failure to accord primacy in strategic thinking to the People being planned-for; to comprehend the rapidly changing forces impinging upon their individual and family lives; and the seriously out-of-date structures in the State that compromise the means used to create and deliver relevant development that will meet their various needs.-
2. The existing system overall is in practice even at present, functionally disconnected from both the social and sites locational realities that an effective Planning system should be regarding as its fundamental priorities.

3. At this time in the 21st Century, forward planning at least of the Perth and Peel City Region subject to substantial population increase; with such an already functionally inadequate Planning system warrants much more than 'adjustment' by those directly involved in the operation of it.
4. The dependency on an old and traditional administrative structure (with 'top-down' didactic colonial overtones) for delivery and supervision of land-use Planning must be urgently be re-evaluated. It was constructed in a former era where 'authority' was unquestioned, social change was gradual and the dimensions of population concentration very different to today. Notwithstanding obvious recent functional management failures by the existing system; the rate of change is now accelerating with global scientific and associated technological capability being rapidly infused into every aspect of daily living.
5. Personal and collective investment in built-environment has also risen and expectations of both quality and choice in surrounding living environment rising to an extent never before witnessed in Australia. It is therefore inevitable that the forward planning systems that should provide essential purpose-designed frameworks for living must be both relevant and much more dynamically flexible to meet those challenges.
6. No other Agency than the Planning Commission with the Department of Planning, as functional managers and overall service-providers as part of the Public Service, is currently available and accountable to the taxpayer - and the State Government is representing the community in general for the outcomes of those Services. (*Indeed all Public Service instrumentalities are accountable for both relevance of outcomes and cost -benefit to the community of the services they have been functionally devised to provide.*)
7. Incredibly, for a local rapidly growing community that appears to imagine itself today to be moving ahead creatively, land-use planning and urban development are in serious crisis. Both the WA Planning Commission and Department of Planning that currently operate together, are in fact completely detached operationally from the actual process of engaging in creative planning - where it is actually delivered to manage and produce relevant future planning outcomes.
8. That detachment, has been a deliberate choice of WAPC/DoP and it has failed- with no means of interactive practical involvement in the detailed processes of development, leaving them isolated only in a theoretical 'instructional' domain relying upon an over-elaborate and costly bureaucracy trying vainly to sustain an 'appearance' of facilitation and remote control.
9. There is ample available visible proof throughout the Perth Region (*that has been allowed to sprawl into Peel Estuarine Region and beyond*), that this combined WAPC/DoP Unit has failed abysmally to produce wise and timely outcomes in almost every aspect of land-use Planning, despite frequent publication of costly 'ex cathedra' theoretical documentation. That is essentially because it has afforded no attention to actually managing how and by whom those theoretical constructs can and will be implemented. That documentation has even been converted to become elaborate statutory 'determinations', but is failing because it is widely known to be functionally disconnected from the practical realities of delivering outcomes.

10. In summary the system and management of it, as operating today and preparing for the future is neither efficient, fully relevant, appropriately flexible, nor cost-effective for the community in its present form.
11. Land-use Planning is characteristically a formative futures-determinant with massive qualitative living implications in its outcomes, as well as quantitative financial investment implications for all of the community, that will define our future in WA.

Elements of the current Planning System in operation.-

The broad principle underlying the formal Planning Act and the chain of 'oversight' by WAPC is founded on an assumption that the core purpose of WAPC with a State-wide remit, is to forecast and advise on the location, efficient and timely construction of relevant major infrastructure likely to be required as a framework for future built environment of all types - industrial, commercial, residential and recreational. Furthermore, it has been believed that planning the location and advising on public expenditure of all of those (mainly for the convenience of Government oversight?) needs to be centralised and elaborate Statutory procedures necessary in order to fairly administer and balance the competing interests of people and developers as land-owners, concerning –where development occurs.

However, the 16 person Planning Commission mainly comprises Chief Executives of other State Public Service Government Agencies with an executive research arm the Department of Planning, has in recent years extended the 'infrastructure' planning remit way beyond that.- Even endeavouring to determine by Regulation in detail the actual forms of urban development, (in a remote desk-researched view), suited to particular purposes at the local realisation level. That has been by means of copious theoretical guideline documentation, but deliberately produced at 'arms-length' from practical engagement in the professional processes of creative urban development; and without any direct functional managerial connection to provide a means to ensure quality-control of the planned outcomes.

That 'distancing' itself specifically prevents the operation of a functional on-going 'feedback-back loop' to ensure practical viability and conceptual up-dating. Other than State Parliament, there is no provision, either during development or post-completion, for outcome results or managerial efficiency of the system overall, that now extends outside the State Public Service, to be continuously monitored and evaluated.

The inevitable result is that as the population of the State has recently grown rapidly, and the range of possible urban development forms become subject to rapid evolution; control by WAPC/DoP as currently structured, is now demonstrably beyond its practical capability. Furthermore, extra cost is being borne by the community for extended bureaucracy of dubious practical utility, simply to try to maintain 'control' that from the resulting visible outcomes, has proved to be largely futile.

(Incidentally the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) in WA has a parallel function regarding planning of natural environment protection that should be, but has not been, integral to forward

evolutionary urban Planning.- While the EPA have ‘technically’ had an opportunity to ‘comment;’ at Local Plan level, but without resources allocated to investigate likely impacts; natural environment has not been accorded other than token reference in urban development planning.- As EPA has recently observed in strident critical terms.)

Concerning residential development - with associated servicing.- Planning of this affects the whole community as it is actually deciding the form and functioning of their future local living environments. The community has tolerated the obviously sub-standard outcomes results with increasing frustration, indeed often in desperation being obliged to engage in quasi-legal procedures to be even heard. That is largely due to the obvious gap between theoretical ‘guidelines’ enshrined in an intricate web of excessive statutory bureaucratic procedures; and the realities of actual development - that should, but is not being, managed to be both situationally and socially ‘engaged’ at local level to ensure actual relevance.

Local Government Authorities have been expected by WAPC to be ‘somehow’ responsible for local supervision and delivery of development planning outcomes in terms of multiple building assemblies and sites relevance, but are in fact ‘advisory’ only to WAPC and with no formal systematic line of actual functional managerial responsibility to and from them, through which worthwhile accountability could be assured.

In fact, most Local Authorities neither have the appropriate means, or organisational structures suited to those purposes in respect of land-use planning. (*Discussed in more detail later in this paper.*)

This comprehensive detachment then leaves the actual professional work of realising creative urban development planning (of multiple building outcomes) entirely to chance, vulnerable and dependent upon the vagaries of commercial land developers - whose business is short-term profitability, and not accountability to the community for the overall quality of district neighbourhood outcomes.

(It must be noted that while commercial developers do promotional ‘marketing’ research for their preferred products, that is altogether different to independent and continuous social needs-research that is an essential function of contemporary creative development planning.)

The local part of the Planning System then in its present form, is therefore also failing overt accountability as an effective service to the community. (The evidence of this disconnection is manifestly visible to anyone throughout the sprawling range of suburban ad hoc, poorly planned and serviced neighbourhoods in the Perth and Peel Region.)

Relevant outcomes of planned urban development should demonstrate the following essential matters to have been researched and taken fully into account -

- 1). Specific characteristics of actual sites, location and the potential community value of all site features and limitations of them.
- 2). Local detail on the changing and widening variety of local social needs of the community clientele across all age groups and having regard for their personal capabilities and resources.

- 3). The current and potentially evolving technology of built form.
- 4). Timely and convenient availability of essential local living infrastructure services of all kinds that the community requires from both government and commercial sources.

Creative professional futures-planning, to be implemented at a local level furthermore cannot be simply the disaggregation of broad nationally and historically-derived research and data. Because it vitally involves at least.-

- 5). Detailed enquiry and investigation regarding relevant sub-regional characteristics and associated potential opportunity for new local employment enterprise. (Such as Tourism.)
- 6). Critical and creative assessment and interpretation of local context - both physical and social values.
- 7). Conceptualisation of alternative projections on outcomes.
- 8). Multi-dimensional illustration by way of communicating concepts to stakeholders.
- 9). Recommending on balance of alternative options.
- 10). Community engagement throughout the above.

Many Local Authorities as currently structured, cannot fully engage with this basic level of detail for practical creative Land-use Planning. Most don't even have the resources or structures to objectively record and appraise site assets within their jurisdiction or engage adequately with their communities in all socio-economic categories. Local Planning 'Schemes' that each Local Authority is required by WAPC to produce to supposedly extend their theoretical Metropolitan Regional 'Scheme' effectively to locally applicable level, (for the same reasons) fail to extend the ideological vision to local realities. –

Yet the above are all essential to underpin, develop and create timely and relevant Development. Consequently many Local Authorities probably should not be burdened with responsibilities for Land-use Development Planning at all –unless the nature of their involvement is fundamentally changed.

On the credit side, the existing Planning Commission does have some future inter-agency infrastructure services planning connection but with (*only*) 4) above (i.e. through the Senior Executives of most, but not all, of the State-wide infrastructure-providing Agencies, being members of that 16 person Commission). But vitally, neither the Commission or the DoP have any direct visibility of the other essential components above; and most importantly neither do the Local Authorities that by some 'remote chance' might? partly legitimise outcomes .

In the foreseeable future context then, from an informed Community 'consumer' perspective - drastic functional revision is now essential to purposefully alter the management of roles and responsibilities in WA for actual Planning policy and delivery – (at least to ensure accountability throughout the process from broad intentions to local realisation in built-form) but hopefully very much more than that.

The Planning System in WA then at present has no proven practical functional validity at local level.-

The system overall is simply out of date conceptually, elements of it are dysfunctional, their actual contribution misunderstood and above all certainly not operating in the balanced public interest. If this continues without major re-structuring, the State will be surrendering any chance of producing relevant and suitable living conditions for a Perth and Peel Region population now forecast to be rising to 3.5 million by 2050.

It is not only the expected high rate of population growth that must be planned-for. Future liveable City Regions of international standard require Teams of Professional Urban Planners and Designers to be continually hard at work with creativity, innovation, flexibility, to be socially-responsive, techno-savvy and above all with a timely response to rapidly changing and evolving future human needs unforeseen in previous generations; but the present WA Planning System itself is now functionally in remote top-heavy bureaucratic over-reach and a major hindrance.

Furthermore, no extension of theoretical statutory obligation placed on commercial land developers will resolve the qualitative planning issues vital to urban development. With the present planning management system, they are able to acquire land opportunistically, (aided by premature zoning by WAPC) to subdivide with minimally relevant Local Structure Plans, sell off blocks and depart – importantly with no formal obligation or on-going accountability whatsoever for the resultant community outcomes. They will quite naturally, always find ways to escape on-going community accountability and greater latitude to increase profitability, because that is the natural core purpose of their business model.

The necessary intensely detailed collaborative professional multi-disciplinary on-ground research and comprehension that creates innovative development solutions is not evident within, or being positively supported anywhere in the existing Planning system. At present that is in- essence 'screened-out' of the WA Planning System by excessive theoretical 'didactic authoritative determinism' from the excessively centralised and over-regulated decision-making structure, managed and operated by the WAPC / Department of Planning.

Despite the 'apparent' sophistication of copious theoretical guideline publications, the System is out-of-touch and has become practically disconnected from what planning future living spaces and conditions for people in the 21st century should really be about.

In summary this failure of the Planning System to continuously adjust with appropriate foresight to the contemporary escalating rate of change in every aspect of life in the State is further testimony to the immediate need for urgent overhaul.

Some recent features of this 'planning' system.-

The WAPC itself has for most of the last decade demonstrated continuously 'groping' for conceptual purpose for the Perth Region with different notional urban development planning models ('Connected City', 'Linear City,' 'Network City' etc.) These have been incorporated into

a range of prominently publicised, supposedly directional framework papers. However, for the most part those have been more idealistic than practical and therefore mentioned more by token reference in print by potential developers, than followed or usefully implemented.–

Each has been broadly sensible but theoretical constructs said to ‘inform’ the rest of the system. But also repeatedly exposing central systematic failure to comprehend the on-ground reality to which these were meant to relate). In fact failing to ‘inform itself first’ about the practical implications at operational level (for example ‘Directions 2031’ and Beyond’ that delineated zoning but has failed to contain needless urban sprawl.)

Recently, in 2013 a State Planning Strategy 2050 (pub.2014) when in draft was extensively explored in a large collaborative cross-sectoral (mainly Government Agency) stakeholder Forum hosted by WAPC. Lively discussions amongst the (140) participants quickly drifted away from macro state-wide infrastructure issues and revealed many relevant near-view problematic planning concerns (initiated freely by the participants recorded on the day) but with most of those given only token reference in the final document. The ‘2050 vision’ timeframe was obviously already then too far distant, indeed the participants were (inevitably) discussing issues of far more immediate concern, indeed foreseen largely in a 2020 context.

(Multi- Agency and ‘stakeholder’ liaison Forums of that type should probably be regular events at all levels in Western Australia and, if heeded could do a great deal to enhance forward Planning.)

The latest ‘framework’ attempt concentrates on ‘Perth and Peel @3.5 million 2050’ in the metropolitan city Region. Notably, the draft once again unrealistically refers under a heading “*Making it happen implementation strategies*” ‘actions, by whom’ - listed as - to “*WAPC/Planning, State and Local Government*”. Still apparently in complete denial of that latter relationship being outdated, dysfunctional, failing and a primary structural planning management issue that must first be confronted to enable any planning relevant to future conditions to emerge.

Also the recent further re-issue in draft of a more voluminous (141 page) theoretical ‘Liveable Neighbourhoods’ document, sensible though it is in parts, is a further example of over-elaborate theoretical, but detached attempted micro-management supposed to produce good planning outcomes by enforcing adoption by Regulatory ‘remote control’ (presumably in the assumed absence of intelligent, creative and innovative professional urban designers?) – Perhaps this is seen by WAPC as a means to ‘teach’ commercial developers with desk-researched theory how to go about local planning!

That voluminous document as it stands in draft form, is still conceptually too limited as it is clearly not written with an understanding of professional creativity in three-dimensional spatial configuration design form and does not discuss the vital the importance of on-going social change and how social research is an essential part of planning community development. Professional neighbourhood planning can however do a great deal to beneficially alter anti-social values (that often develops amongst young people in sprawling socially disconnected environments). **Indeed sadly once again typical of WAPC/DoP current theoretical detached strategic thinking about what and who Local Community Planning is actually for.**

Well-designed genuine 'liveable' neighbourhoods evolve from thorough community research, and intergenerational engagement – to create positive local identity and community 'ownership' that in future should be planned as 'integrated' community neighbourhoods.

Future integrated liveable neighbourhoods, whether inner or outer suburban, or high-density central localities, should in future be professionally 'master-planned' as 'comprehensive development areas' or precincts where a high proportion of residential provision is intended.- Embracing a cross section and choices of community age provision and include all essential convenience services, social facilities, both indoors and outdoors, (as well as shared remote working 'tele-workspaces' that are becoming increasingly normal for a rising proportion of working people).

It must also be noted that future neighbourhoods (that will be where numerically most residents of a large City Region will live and also partly work), are becoming far too complex to be planned without the full engagement of a comprehensive professional Team.

(The current WAPC planning system neighbourhood development model that involves detached 'preaching' direct to 'short-term buy land, sub-divide and sell off blocks- commercial developers' is now well past its 'use-by date'.)

Disjointed System Structure and Cost to the Community.-

The present structure puts the existing Planning Commission in a position to control and be serviced by a Department of Planning. That Department itself is however at present only advisory executive support to the WAPC and has no independent public visibility and no direct delivery responsibilities, yet in turn it drafts theoretical 'rules' for Local Planning, for authorisation by the 'Commission.' But as noted above, most importantly without either body having the essential continuing direct exposure to comprehend any of the social or site conditions to which actual development is expected respond, or having continuing executive linkage with agencies that might have that responsibility.

Therefore this centralised system of Commission and Planning Department together are clearly in functional over-reach beyond a reasonable level of practical cost-benefit accountability to the community. That over-reach is 'disguised' by an elaborate and self-perpetuating Regulatory network (with the legal authority of Parliament) that is now in practical terms really a wasteful unproductive extension of (costly) Public Service bureaucracy.

The overall community-cost of it is not only a direct impost of dubious value on State Treasury (i.e. public funds) through personnel as currently deployed, but even more so by indirect impost on the community for the continuing poor outcomes that are not based on, or executively linked with, intelligent and constantly updated local social research. Also by the excessive procedural bureaucratic elaboration, that in turn generates much more of that at community level as well as frequently inducing voluminous and costly Appeals and litigation.

There is an entirely unjustified presumption that the WAPC with DoP having developed elaborate theoretical strategies, frameworks and guidelines; can leave Local Authorities to implement them and can then simply (without engaging at all with the real work of creative planning) run a desk-based 'compliance check' of their decisions on paper and – 'job done'! That is of a course a complete fallacy. (Relevant facts of Local Authority operation are detailed below).

Not only is this a denial of what real creative multi-disciplinary teamwork urban and rural Planning is actually about, but ignores the rate of change and innovation to which planning must be responsive. That simply cannot be 'frozen' into an unwieldy Metropolitan Regional Scheme (MRS) prescribed by remote control that the current system depends upon.

Broad or 'macro' contextual frameworks are of course necessary but at present are being extended to extremes by attempted theoretical micro-management supported by Regulations. Plus beyond them, the actual mechanics of operational delivery are ad hoc and altogether devoid of quality-assurance. (The local LPS theoretical sub-sets of that theoretical MRS, have very little actual local community exposure, relevance or currency, and inevitably require (costly) procedural updating even to have any deliverable local relevance at all.

Measured in open Community view today by the visible evidence of supposedly 'planned' outcomes such as -

- * sprawling and wasteful land-use;
- * failure to produce socially integrated new neighbourhoods;
- * poor district servicing in new developments;
- * failure to plan for adequate supply of affordable housing and aged-person services;
- * extended and inefficient transportation networks;

- * failure to plan for adequate recreational parks and community sports facilities;
- * widespread destruction of unique biodiversity..... etc.

The overall results are with few exceptions, failing abysmally to deliver creative and cost effective land-use planning at local level for the community by this systematic 'remote-control.' – To the extent it even appears as though serving the actual needs of people is not the purpose of Planning in WA ?

Furthermore the overall process within the System as it currently exists, also actually drives up the cost of land to the community.-

- A). By premature signaling to would-be entrepreneurial developers, land-use proposals depicted as zoning on theoretical 2 dimensional mapping, based only on empirical supposition from afar and not on practical local research.
- B). By naively proclaiming firmly prescribed 'zoning' in Metropolitan Regional and Local Schemes before the land and proposed social context so affected has actually been appraised, surveyed or assessed for any purpose.
- C). By 'Schemes' later always requiring expensive bureaucratic and time-wasting procedures to alter to fit actual local conditions – that should obviously have been identified before any zoning was set down.

Continuing Failure of System Management overall to Communicate, respond and interact with Community.-

1. Headlines in WA media such as *"Suburban Spread biggest Problem"* - *"Sprawl that swamped a City"* and *"Planning needs Transparency"* - *"Shift in thinking needed to cope with city's growth"* - *"Sprawl strangling Perth's environment"* **go unanswered as though the WAPC doesn't see itself as responsible – whereas of course it absolutely is, and has been.-** Particularly as it has chosen to be so centrally deterministic in its management of planning.
2. Then there are Local Authorities who have been implicitly but inappropriately relied-upon by the WAPC bearing in mind their structure and limited resources; to be the link between theoretical planning and the community. If that had been working well, why would we see other headlines such as *"Local government must be more transparent"* ? Such open public discussion of the obvious, is further testimony to community dissatisfaction with the results of the present Planning System.

Current interaction with the community by Local Authorities on planning issues is actually minimal and methods usually shallow, out-of-date and giving the appearance of only being done for 'administrative convenience' as directed by WAPC i.e. - Typically 'inviting public comment' usually by newspaper adverts in the 'public notices' columns – (that few people read today). *Without for example, an extensive range of informative and genuine interactive local forums to discuss local research findings-and development proposals.*

Written public responses are in fact usually precis-ed (selectively) by the same people who produced the documentation rather than independently. Then without that input being analysed in unbiased detail and various opinions shared, to be further discussed by the public – decisions are made that inevitably leave the public disgusted by absolutely minimal genuine 'engagement'.

Role of the Environmental Protection Authority. (EPA)

The EPA in WA has a parallel role regarding natural environment protection that should have been much more specifically addressed in development Planning, but has been seriously inhibited due to future community value of natural environment not being given adequate practical emphasis - (with recently highlighted detrimental results that will have long term consequences).

Reference to conservation of natural environment – for instance even for local microclimatic modification and recreational value, quite apart from our regional world-class recognition as a unique biodiversity 'hot-spot' is minimal. Such deliberate squandering of a free resource has mainly been 'notionally' mentioned in the theoretical documents issued by the WAPC (e.g. Directions 2031) – but with inclusion only in unspecific generalities and no serious practical attempt made to relate to either regional or local planning implications.

Although the EPA (with its executive Department of Environment) has been heavily committed in providing advice on large-scale industrial developments and processes, it has had a continuing statutory role in advising and commenting on Planning developments that impact upon the natural environment. But importantly has had very severe limitations in professional resource-availability from its executive Environment Department to investigate or verify the actual environment of sites proposed for development. (The EPA role at State level is complementary to the long standing responsibility of the Commonwealth Government Department of Environment, that has a national overview and makes international commitments with regard to natural wild-life species, habitat and environmental conservation; principally through Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) legislation.)

Recently (Ref. the SAPPR) Commonwealth Government has proposed to transfer part of that role relating to local Development Planning within States, to the States themselves. Their

stated objective is to reduce duplication and simplify Development planning approval procedures.

However, that has caused the EPA to in turn express great concern, documented in their recent 'Strategic Advice' to the Government; about the planning of urban development in WA - having had a devastating effect, in fact permanent obliteration of large areas of unique and internationally recognised heritage biodiversity that has existed in and around the Perth and Peel region.

That concern, echoed today throughout the community, was raised very specifically by the EPA, being specifically critical recently about uncontained urban sprawl. That sprawl has occurred and is still continuing under the supposed control of WAPC, and at a time when open space of all kinds, even sports playing fields and invaluable recreational parkland are in short supply. Biodiverse land areas are being lost by large scale indiscriminate bulldozing clearance at a prodigious rate through lamentably poor forward planning managed by WAPC.

Two salient points arise from the above.-

Firstly; that the recent EPA advice is further and independent official confirmation that the Planning System is in crisis regarding negative but avoidable environmental impact, resulting from the current management of development planning.

Secondly; that unless that management of Planning is changed, the EPA in WA would be most unwise (as initially suggested by the Commonwealth), to trust the existing Planning system to allow any omnibus permission to be given to Developers (via Local Authorities). The planning procedures prescribed and operational planning responsibilities as currently managed by the WAPC, unless changed, will certainly extend and worsen the (avoidable) loss of natural environment that is roundly condemned by EPA.

The Current presumed Role and Functions of Local Authorities in development Planning?

So far in the foregoing we have mainly addressed dysfunctionality of the system at Commission and Department levels, particularly to manage the actual process of creative Planning.- Where else then does the actual process of creative planning occur that the community could rely on to be acting in the genuine public interest?

As noted above, there appears to be a long-standing presumption on the part of the Commission (and perhaps Government) that it can and should occur at Local Authority level?

However - that capability is an entirely false and misleading presumption - as detailed below. Few Local Authorities are appropriately staffed to engage in actual creative operational planning, indeed most make no attempt to do so. (Yet direct accountability to the public for

what is delivered can go no further, since beyond them to commercial developers there is no electoral accountability whatsoever.)

Taking that apparently 'presumed' WAPC view at face value, Suburban Local Authorities by way of example would then have been responsible for the: -

- Excessive urban sprawl;
- Inconvenient lengthy and economically wasteful transportation systems connecting homes and work;
- Grossly wasteful and anti-social residential 'ribbon development' extending along major traffic routes through rural landscapes without forward-planned adequately serviced 'nodal' residential neighbourhood network structures;
- Absence of comprehensive development to provide timely, socially responsible residential planning and foster inclusive inter-generationally supported neighbourhoods;
- Poor time sequence-planning to guarantee essential local services appropriate to need by families as residential areas are developed;
- Insufficient provision of both formal and informal outdoor recreational space, public parks, and retain established shade trees;
- Thoughtless and avoidable destruction of high-future economic and social value natural biodiversity (in a Region internationally renowned for concentrated unique biodiversity!);
- Residential housing development being condoned in mosquito infested saline swampland;
- Failure to plan for the already proven reduction in regional annual rainfall, to guard against damaging pollution of waterways and protect against encroaching marine and terrestrial salinity;
- Visually chaotic urban areas lacking in both spatial linkages and local social neighbourhood identity; and related -
- Failure to ensure the appropriate employment of available creative and innovative professional skills locally in urban design.
- Inner suburban areas being plagued by ad hoc infill, predominantly on disconnected gap- sites but again without adequate attention to properly serviced and sustainable social neighbourhood development.
- Continuing spatial dominance of traditional vehicular transportation systems in urban areas when better forward planning could have progressively resulted in creating a safer distinct pedestrian 'realm' with people-friendly spatial separation.

(-All those combined negative planning outcomes are easily visible today in outer suburban and many inner suburban localities of the Perth and Peel region.) -

However, let us then explore whether the above WAPC presumption about Local Authorities is actually fair and reasonable, or simply unrealistic and actually an overall System management failure by WAPC/DoP themselves ?.....

As local populations have grown and the intensity of demand on services increased, particularly over the last decade, increasing work-load and expectations have been placed on Local Authorities, but their structure and organisation have not altered. Those in relation to Planning have however become increasingly complex and now need a much more extensive range of applied local research, professional insight, skill and management effort than most are capable of providing.

The WAPC/DoP have apparently tried, unsuccessfully to counter that shortfall at Local Authority level, by issuing more and more theoretical 'guideline' directives, but overlooking the fact that those are generalised and can neither be site-specific or compatible with local social circumstances.

Apparently still unimpressed with the outcome, instead of tackling the issue at the client interface with the community, the WAPC/DoP has introduced an intermediate layer – over Local Authorities, of small independent expert Development Assessment Panels (DAPs) to reassess decisions made by Local Authority Councils.

But ironically those Panels of course ALSO have very limited or more likely non-existent local site and social context knowledge to which the development proposals relate! – (Commercial Developers naturally applaud these DAPs, because they feel they are likely to be less restricted by detached independent scrutiny of their proposals concerning social and sites relevance, genuine creativity and timely involvement in the full comprehensive planning and construction for example of new neighbourhoods.) - but the community are obviously still the losers.

Once again the system fails to deliver relevant outcomes that the community is entitled to expect because the existing WAPC/DoP managed system overall for which they are accountable, although a heavy impost on the public purse, is not managed properly through to create sensible outcomes.

Questions:

a) In view of the urgent need for a much more rapidly-responsive, innovative and creative planning intervention being needed, should Local Authorities be involved in planning at all?

If so in what ways, and how can that involvement be properly managed, and by whom?

b) Where could the on-going professional local (professional) community development research and liaison missing at present be secured, and where could actual socially responsible creative planning be done by others who would carry accountability for it - with communities not left to the unaccountable vagaries of the commercial development industry?

Importantly it must be accepted that professional land-use planning is realistically 'alien' to the primary purposes and modus-operandi of Local Authorities. Their structure, managerial procedures and operational methods (under 'Standing Orders') were devised for quite different purposes, determined by the State Department of Local Government, (that is not engaged at all in Land-use planning). They are organisationally structured for the supply and efficient management of Local Services being directly and continuously provided in their various districts, and those have little if any commonality with planning environments for future living.

Therefore the hitherto implicit presumption by WAPC - that the complex creative processes involved in configuring future living environments, and optimum land-use in a dynamic and rapidly changing social context can simply be 'tacked-on' to the much simpler services-provision role of Local Authorities, is now and for the future quite simply unreal and unsustainable .

Consider for instance -The actual operational methods and procedures of Local Authorities.

They each have an Executive Team that manages local services organisation, financing, provision and staffing for various local operations. Plus (and similar in function to a comparable size private-enterprise Company) that executive team has a non-executive Board that has an overall policy determining role. That 'Board' called a Council, is comprised of lay- persons elected, (normally for a 4 year term) from the various districts within land boundaries defined in convenient size and configuration for Local Services . Those mainly involve - management and maintenance of immediately available Services - that include Lighting, Public parks and gardens, Sport and Recreational facilities, Refuse disposal, and Building control (*the latter not requiring creativity, largely involves application of current best-practices prescribed under nationally agreed Codes of Practice*) .

Financially: Local Authorities apply the money they raise through local Council Rates and taxes in configuring, administering and paying for those direct services, for the most part with efficient management procedures operated by an Executive Team headed by a CEO. The expenditure of those funds, also as mentioned above, is overseen and voted on by Councilors.

Operationally: The elected Local Authority Councilors, meet in full collective session monthly and with functional Sub-Committees of Councilors, having previously met with – (in attendance) the Chief Executive and with only those senior executives with relevant functional responsibilities. Those Committees are provided with regular expenditure and policy progress reports and any recommendations that affect operational outcomes or overall policy.

Councilors meeting in the function-specific Sub-Committees (often in number around 50% - 80% of the full Council) will have received those reports and under the strictly regulated formal procedures, vote on them, with brief discussion only occurring if a Councilor raises an alternative motion to the recommendation proposed on paper by the executive officers. Those resolutions are then in turn forwarded to the monthly full Council meetings, for ratification – and often simply adopted by vote 'en bloc' with no discussion at all).

Members of the public can view the written reports incorporated into Agenda that are to be considered at both Committee and full Council meetings, (made available on-line 48 business hours ahead of those meetings). Each Committee and Council meeting has provision for members of the public to ask questions related to the Agenda, also on prior request - to request to speak in time-limited (5 to 15 min.) 'delegation' regarding specific agenda items. In the latter case, at the discretion of the Presiding Member, Councilors are permitted to ask questions of the 'delegates,' but not engage in any discussion with them.

All of the above procedures and practices are strictly determined by the Department of Local Government under 'Standing Orders'. (That Department also has guidelines relating to collective community engagement by Councilors but those leave considerable discretion as to how frequently, and in what form that interaction occurs). Note this type of meetings formality actually prohibits Councilors engaging in open discussion; and that often leaves the public who take the trouble to attend and observe how decisions are taken, frequently dissatisfied with the process.

Current Involvement of Local Authorities with Planning.-

Face to face community 'referencing' by Councilors on Planning matters, no doubt partly because they feel uncomfortable to openly discuss them, is minimal. – The ambiguity they find themselves in, on the one hand feeling they should be in dialogue with community on their views, and on the other that they will likely have to vote to accept or otherwise Officer Recommendations (usually based primarily on what WAPC directives say), is a serious disincentive. Listening to public opinion without making comment is a difficult dilemma that most will prefer to avoid, and they are usually expected by electors in their own Wards to have an essentially near-view parochial and defensive rather than broadly creative futures role.

In the special case of land-use forward Planning, the Executive in most Local Authorities (though not all) has a small team of Planning officers whose role (most important to note) is essentially procedural Planning Control and they are advisory to both the Council and to prospective land developers - (interpreting WAPC policies and guidelines). They are not expected to be professionally involved in sites appraisal, local social enquiry and community research, or 'hands-on' creative urban planning.

The advice these Planning Officers convey is strictly in accordance with standard procedures and Guidelines that are determined by the State Department of Planning (DoP) whose operations are overseen by a Planning Commission (WAPC).

As noted above, the Planning officers in local Authority executive teams are engaged then -in Planning Control – interpreting and advising on generalised determinations by the WAPC. Written 'Public comment' is formally sought on development proposals by advertising and those Planning Control officers provide a precis of those, along with recommendations - that are invariably based on the remote (theoretically derived) WAPC policies and directives.

Those officers also compile Local Planning Schemes (LPS) (2 dimensional flat plan diagrammatic depictions with text.) as a means of translating WAPC directives implicit in the MRS into local zoning for various purposes. – BUT apart from precis of written public comment, occasionally sought, they do not engage in either detailed sites assessment, or live on-going social research, and very rarely engage at all with the people or communities being planned-for. Except (only) a few L/As do hold occasional community workshops to test public reaction to Local Planning Schemes; - or Structure Plans (sometimes known as 'Outline Development Plans') usually when proposed by private sector developers, and POs again advise on WAPC policy implications.

Going further into the matter of ‘engagement’ with the public – a majority of elected lay-Councilors naturally do not, or cannot, fully engage with the complex essence of practical Land-use Planning and urban design,(e.g. the detail of local sites and dynamically changing social needs) and most feel they are insufficiently knowledgeable to do more than apply basic logic when Executive officers place recommendations based on WAPC criteria and brief synoptic summaries of ‘public comment’ before them for decision (to recommend approval, or otherwise to WAPC).

While it might be presumed by WAPC that Local Planning Schemes may provide a link with WAPC policies, in fact as outlined above, they usually don’t translate into either the detail of local sites or social context but therefore simply perpetuate combined relative ignorance. (Note also the community cannot really engage at all with Local Planning Schemes due to their simplified graphical presentation, and detailed on-site implications are not explained).

Therefore the conventional assumption by WAPC (and perhaps Government Politicians) that because Councilors are locally elected they will be fully cognizant of local community needs - is obviously incorrect in respect of planning the creation of future socially and economically appropriate environments for living, and both a false and naïve assumption.

Furthermore the Executive officers that underpin those Councils ‘might have been?’ expected by WAPC to engage in actual creative land-use local plan evolution, but the majority certainly do not.

If they were to do that, Local Authorities would have to employ and manage much larger numbers of professional people engaged directly in development plan evolution. For instance to -

- a) Have the means to research and professionally engage adequately and continuously with the community in all socio-economic categories.
- b) Determine broad future local infrastructure requirements at district level;
- c) Critically appraise all potential development site assets, including natural assets;
- c) Select and propose relevant locations for different potential activity-areas at site level, and
- d) Have design capability to create comprehensive, practically and visually appropriate comprehensive neighbourhood urban development concepts for relevant future social living-environment provision in their districts.

Local Authority Contribution to Development Planning, in Summary.-

Most Local Authority executive teams do not at present have anywhere near overall resource capability for the above purposes and they simply discharge a ‘planning control’ function based on their understanding of the legislatively supported ‘instructions’ in the broad guidelines and zonal dispositions supposed to have been incorporated in ‘Local Planning Schemes’ that are approved by the WAPC.- as being consistent with a Metropolitan Regional

Scheme (that was itself not derived from the actual known and verified local conditions to which it is 'supposed' to relate).

Since the DoP/WAPC itself has no other professional contact or 'visibility' at a sufficiently local level other than 2 dimensional diagrammatic plans; the overall consequence is that the range of issues that the community perceives as essential for their future living environment needs, is neither adequately researched or creatively interpreted by anyone - with the community interests not being understood, or protected by the 'Public Service' legislated Planning function that is expected by the community to be a State Government Public Service responsibility that they pay for from taxation.

There is therefore currently an essential but undeliverable set of planning functions at the local end - where the complex results of sound urban and suburban planning might be realised and quality-verified. Those are however currently, by default, abandoned by the Planning system to be supposedly (?) delivered entirely ad hoc by commercial Developers. (Whose actual role and purpose is naturally to profit by enterprise and who would certainly not accept any on-going social commitment responsibilities.) – Hence the overall planning development system currently fails its primary functional purposes!

REMINDER: Neither WAPC or the DoP have any continuing operational contact with actual sites or means to liaise directly with either prospective developers, or research the actual social realities of people in local communities being planned-for. Most importantly, apart from a compliance role, Local Authorities in practice don't either !

Surely this almost bizarre lack of real engagement throughout the Planning System with the crucial formative elements of practical Planning needs to be urgently recognised and addressed?

The State Government through its Planning Department and Planning Commission are clearly at present making unrealistic demands upon Local Authorities, and must fully re-conceptualise the necessary resources for the forecast urban expansion etc. and where best they should be cost-effectively deployed.

A Current Opportunity for Change ? -

An unusual and potentially convenient opportunity may be available to initiate much needed beneficial change in the Planning System overall.- With the WAPC now engaged in forward Planning Strategies via 'Perth and Peel @ 3.5 million' and hopefully, together with the EPA prompted by the Commonwealth Government engaging in a full review and revisions of forward Planning Strategies and a 'Strategic Assessment of Perth and Peel Region' (SAPPR) that seeks to address impacts on future development on Commonwealth matters of national significance and State environmental factors.

That review on the part of WAPC appears however to have begun with a relatively narrow focus, to update 5 'high-level' (meaning broad and theoretically desk-researched) Regional Frameworks for the Perth and Peel Metropolitan Region. However, the EPA in a parallel strategic advice document has already made scathing observations about recent Planning outcomes, that should oblige WAPC / DoP to at least take stock of the recent past outcomes of its own existing methodology and consider the appropriateness of that in a 'futures' perspective.

FUNCTIONAL REVIEW SUMMARY:

A major functional re-evaluation of the overall Planning Process and outcomes measured against the future challenges of growth and the massive social impact of rapid technological evolution is unavoidable. It is now abundantly obvious that the present system in totality is not even being managed to produce acceptable community outcomes today, let alone in the future.

The existing WAPC and Department of Planning together are allowing systematic functional failure to perpetuate, knowing that commercial developers can have no commitment to engage in socially responsible research to produce timely, balanced and comprehensively planned development; and also that the Local Authorities as intermediaries are inappropriately structured and resourced to adequately participate.

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A Suggested fundamental Re-structuring of the Land-use Planning and Development management System in Western Australia.-

The following proposal and suggestions are offered in an attempt to resolve some of the negative and retrograde features of the existing planning System as detailed above.

Those may assist fresh thinking, to interface forward planning more appropriately with the rapidly changing social and technological community futures context - and in particular move the Perth Region closer to world-class in City development. That task, from where we are today in WA , is a daunting challenge and deserves very serious and urgent attention from everyone involved.-

In the immediate future context, Planning methodology will become increasingly vulnerable to rapidly evolving and unforeseeable trends and multi-faceted technology; and therefore need to be much less regimented, more flexible and tolerant of experimentation and able to accommodate new ideas on urban living. Increasing choice will be demanded and innovations from other parts of the world imported and need to be experimented-with locally.

Consequently the data and information required to keep the Region abreast, will be expanding rapidly and continuously. Applied research needs to be interactively spread much wider amongst all the professions involved locally in every aspect of future planning, and to remain relevant cannot afford to be frozen into directives applicable to any form of development, other than to safeguard basic community health and welfare.

PROPOSAL -

1. The State Futures Planning Council *(noting that the WAPC has a 16 person membership, already 11 of whom are Senior Executives of other State Government Agencies)* would have a different but very specific Statewide Strategic economic research, population forecasting and general locational advisory role to the Government on all major infrastructure at the 'macro' level, primarily to enhance and achieve cross-sector collaborating coordination between Government Agencies each planning specific services. That Council with revised functions (and to include both the Senior Executive of the Dept of Environment and the EPA) would have its own supporting Statewide Research Unit with re-defined 'whole of Government' links and be administratively separated from - the Department of (Land use) Planning and Urban Development. (Would not be involved as WAPC has been with overseeing urban development planning management.)

2. The Department of Planning and urban Development would become a separate administrative entity, retain distinct but broadly similar capability to the present, but with the addition of -

- (a) a more specialised professional Legal Unit;
- (b) Planning Liaison Unit; and
- (c) a group of directly employed Regional /Urban Planning teams .

This functionally revised Department of Planning would have a strategic metro and regional planning framework brief, but that would be altered from the present to become a 'rolling' plan of less specifically detailed 'broad-brush' intentions, linked via an internal functional core Planning Liaison Unit (b) coordinating a series of 'hands- on' professional multi-disciplinary Regional Planning Teams (c) directly engaged in - actual creative district analyses, actual concept plan formation and design modelling.

The Legal Unit would advise, adjudicate in principle, and refer for arbitration competing development and conservation interests of all kinds; (replacing the current voluminous, over-complex, costly, slow and heavily bureaucratic chain of Regulations, related to the present Planning and Development Act, that wastefully involves the community in more of the same).

The Planning and Development Act itself and associated Regulations , with the cooperation of Parliament, would be simplified to facilitate the expected much more dynamic future for the land-use planning decision-making process, while retaining the essential principles of adjudicating as a

last resort, fairness between competing or conflicting interests, in principle, on behalf of the community overall.

The Regional/Urban Planning Teams would be engaged, sites and district specific as required, with a detailed urban design evolution and a delivery role. Seven multi- disciplinary professional Teams would be continuously preparing detailed conceptualisations in Comprehensive Development Area (CDA) ‘precinct’ etc. form. Five of them for the Perth-Peel metro Region and two for outer Regions, supplemented as required for newer growing urban centres such as Bunbury, Geraldton and Karratha.

The extent of detailed district modelling would depend on local landholdings.- Commercial Developers would have an opportunity to use in full the modelling options developed by the Regional Teams or introduce their own design team – provided an equivalent new DP standard of CDA urban design was achievable.

The Regional Planning Teams would interface with Local Authorities directly through new appointments by Local Authorities of Local ‘Community Development Officers’.

(This revised Department to include Social research and Biodiversity/ landscape planning units.)

Future Relevance of the Local Government Administrative system to Planning? –

As outlined earlier in this paper, the simplified formality mismatch with the functions of creative professional futures planning, at a local level, is because creative urban Planning is not simply an administrative deployment of money to local services or even the application of received Statutory Instruments, but involves detailed ‘live’ enquiry, assessment and interpretation of context - both physical on-site, and social interacting with the community, plus foresight derived from recording trends and probabilities, visualisation of alternative projections on outcomes, and recommending on balance of options. These functions are very different and indeed far too complex to fit with their other wide range of responsibilities, and Councilors in reality have great difficulty in engaging helpfully with them (sometimes they will say they ‘discuss the detail privately beforehand,’ but this generally isn’t borne out by what is usually demonstrated to the Community in formal Council meetings.)

(Reminder -Local Authorities therefore typically at present don’t do any actual creative developmental planning at all.)

3. Local Authority roles in planning would be significantly altered, and the involvement of elected Councilors would be removed from the ‘voting’ format with minimal free discussion possible as at present under Dept. of Local Government’s ‘Standing Orders’ that they must comply with.
4. However, all Councilors would have an opportunity to participate via their own new ‘Standing- ‘Community Development Advisory Group (i)’. To work with and support their own Community Development Officers (ii) – new positions as described below. Those CDOs

would maintain continuing liaison with their relevant Regional Urban Planning Team (2.(c) above).

(NOTE: It is envisaged that In the above re-modelled system, both the State Infrastructure Planning Commission and the Department of Planning and Development would report independently to and advise the Minister for Planning in respect of their revised functions.)

Regarding the re-structured Department of Planning and Development, the centralisation of detailed urban development planning by way of standard 'directives' to be reduced to a minimum (But still retain the capability for arbitration between competing developments and also conservation interests of all kinds via the Legal Unit (a) as mentioned above.)

(That reduction in centralisation is because - in the more dynamic future context, central directives become 'frozen' in time at the point of publication and the source- material for them is a collected snapshot of current fact. However, forward predictions on vital aspects are not constants, but known to be changing frequently at an increasing pace.

The unknown dimensions of major variables include very rapid advances in science and technology that most importantly are altering every aspect of individual and social life patterns - as well as making feasible new building forms and associated technology. In other words the actual elements themselves being planned will be changing rapidly and in unpredictable ways, and the professional Urban Planning Teams are best placed to be abreast of those, and being part of a Government Department structure retain Financial and Political (Ministerial) visibility and oversight.

It is obviously now and for the future increasingly difficult for Commercial Developers alone to have any real commitment to comprehensive planning and design of integrated urban neighbourhoods – (whether outer suburban, inner suburban or central city). All those in future require complex creative initiatives that have essential links to more comprehensive consideration of - social and situational conditions, well beyond individual sites they may purchase. Properly staffed professional Urban Planning Teams as proposed will be best placed to do that.-

Further explanation of the new 'PlanningTeam' functions and their relationship with Local Authorities.-

The Urban Planning Teams (c) to be established as outlined, would be a new element of the Department of Planning and Development with revised functions. These would in most cases not only relieve Local Authorities of visualised planning development responsibilities that they have found very difficult, but provide an actual 'hands-on' creative urban design function that the majority of Local Authorities do not.

The multi-disciplinary professional 'Planning Teams' introduced would be available on demand for all urban development Districts throughout the Region, prior to commercial developers being approved to proceed with subdivisions that involve any new or re-constructed neighbourhood development. Comprehensive Development Area (CDA) principles would henceforth be applied universally for those

- so that neighbourhoods are designed to be integrated as totally serviced and socially balanced concepts from the outset.

Each Urban development Planning Team (c) will comprise a relevant range of professional expertise to produce local plans at district level and translate them into potential visual built form, including; e.g. Sites analysis, - local survey investigation, assessment and interpretation of site conditions including subsurface and surface landform, existing local vegetation and biodiversity, local microclimates; and complex social conditions and needs across all age-ranges, lifestyles and income levels.-

Be able to recommend relevant evolving technology, experimental building and structural forms, servicing methodology and advancing personal transportation technology implications. These Teams would include professional architects, urban landscape architect/ designers and social analysts: (Site-specific social analysis would link directly as required, with the proposed Local Authority CDOs below.)

Local Authority involvement in Planning would however be fully and frankly re-appraised case by case in terms of actual capability to be involved with genuine informed creative professional planning contributions to offer. That re-appraisal should allow for the possibility that some Local Authorities may choose to set up specific and different means to contribute constructively to local planning. (But that would need to be aside from and different to, their standard procedures under the Standing Orders issued by the Department of Local Government, that have proved unsuitable to deal with the increasing complexity of future urban planning.

However - at the minimum all Local Authorities should have professional (Social Psychologist) Community Development personnel (CDO) *at least one person*, whose roles are intensive social-needs and profiling research, continually interactive community liaison and social-change facilitation within the community. This will provide continuing engagement and expert feedback that has previously been ad hoc, erratic, or completely absent – and minimise aggravation to Community who have such complex and busy lives that they are simply unaware of changes proposed and happening in their locality. These professionals will also be continually involved in post-construction neighbourhood community growth facilitation as an integral part of their work.

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Executive Summary (of full Paper)-

The current System of land-use Planning and urban design management as currently structured is not capable of managing and supporting the creative future evolution of the Perth and Peel City Region without fundamental change. The organisation and management of it is effectively dysfunctional in important sectors and detached from association with vital realities of delivering sensible outcomes.

No serious attention is actually directed anywhere in the system to practically researching the plethora of different and rapidly changing social needs of the community by any of the

participant Agencies (hitherto presumed to include Local Authorities); and incorporating that vital information into actual built development.

Furthermore, despite the magnificent qualities of the natural setting - appreciated by residents and visitors alike, the special biodiverse characteristics of Local Sites throughout the Perth and Peel Region have been almost universally ignored at every practical level of Planning, and are being progressively and irresponsibly obliterated.

It is clearly known and understood that Commercial Developers as a natural result of their business model have no commitment to either of the above key future-planning issues that require continuing creative involvement; but the vague and detached management of the current System, naively assumes they have.

Connections between the different supposedly functioning Tiers of Urban Planning and Design responsibility have been far more imagined than real by Planning System Management, and consequent failure to detect, confront and resolve them has resulted in an accumulation of excessively wasteful and unproductive bureaucracy – to generally produce what have recently been extensively publicised as inefficient and socially unattractive outcomes.

The Community that one must assume should be essential future stakeholders in the created results of Planning and Urban Design that comprise the actual physical fabric for their future living, are effectively marginalised, and denied real opportunities to collectively contribute, due to the way the System is currently configured and operationally managed.

The current System appears to deliberately ignore the fact that creation of beautiful, efficient, and sustainable future Cities, and their constituent neighbourhoods, is essentially a Team activity where each of the necessary functional contributions is managed to be respectfully identified, and professionally facilitated to be continuously creative and innovative in their respective roles. -

In contrast, Management of the Planning System in WA currently attempts an (inevitably futile) detached top-down, theoretically-sourced operational style, even extending to (often naïve) detailed design directives; but with obvious limited practical comprehension of how professional Team Processes should be deeply involved – (and not obstructed by unnecessary bureaucratic procedures).

Politicians need to ask simply - why is there such an enormous gap between the copious theoretical Regulatory documentation issued by WAPC and the quality of outcomes?

However, any critical functional review of a business system is of limited value unless remedial measures are suggested. In this case all of the functional components and

constituent parts of the system must be fully reconsidered to suit a rapidly changing operational context. A Proposed Model for re-structuring of the Land Use Planning management System is therefore detailed in an attempt to creatively resolve some of the negative and retrograde features that must be urgently confronted.

[Fortuitously a rare opportunity has arisen to seriously address these issues in a current (State and Commonwealth) “Strategic Assessment of Perth and Peel Region” (SAPPR) that is expected to be drafted and available for public comment by early 2016.]

Origin and Authorship.

This paper incorporates recent first-hand professional knowledge and experiences spread over four years voluntarily assisting various Community groups and informally researching with numerous WA agencies, both Government and Community-based, on numerous issues variously involving the formal land-use Planning and Development delivery System in WA, as well as informally assisting Local Authority Councillors to comprehend and interface with complex land-use Planning issues. (Averaging in total over 30 hours per week since 2011).

Having been invited as a former senior Public Servant and independent community representative to a State Planning Strategy 2050 Forum organised by WAPC, I became further concerned not only about the structure and management of the Planning System, but also the effective marginalisation of community input and paucity of social science research that should be at the core of future creative development planning.

I therefore assembled and sponsored an open independent website in 2014, free from advertising material ‘Planning for People WA’ (pfpwa.com) that “collects insights, critically considers current outcomes and provokes constructive and creative thinking to share and contribute to shaping the future of our cities towns and neighbourhoods” – that has been widely accessed, including by Local Authorities and planning professionals many of whom have contributed but by choice preferred to remain anonymous.

My volunteering in ‘retirement’ has applied the benefit of a long and varied professional career beginning as a Scottish architect and a multi-discipline urban design team leader with a large City in England; innovative professional teaching in the university sector; private practice, HM appointed independent professional adviser to the British Government; and later emigrating to WA in a different role- involved in many peak level national Committees in Australia and also leading international delegations (from both countries).

I know with certainty that the frankly expressed views in this Paper will have widespread professional and community support, and it is offered to the State Government from an informed but independent community-based perspective. I do hope the extensive contribution involved will prove useful.

Peter H Forrest . 14th October 2015 / 10th May 2016. (email: community23@bigpond.com)

APPENDIX:

Other relevant suggestions - and some immediately foreseeable trends.-

1). Regarding Local Authorities and External Consultants.- A few Local authorities in recognition of their practical limitation in Local Planning have recently begun to experiment by stretching their resources to employ external private Planning Consultancy practices. While these may certainly assist, there are currently no standards or guidelines governing the range of included skills necessary to provide creative professional urban planning and design services in this way.

A number of local Planning consultancies, although familiar with existing WAPC guidelines etc. don't employ a full range of professional skills appropriate to future creative urban design and planning, and can really only add extra people with 'Planning Control' experience that most urban Local Authorities would already have. With that proviso, the suggested Department of Planning as re-structured could produce guidelines on the range of creative professional skills required, similar to the range acceptable for its own Urban Development Planning Teams, together with recommendations on appropriate fees structures.

2). However for the above, existing Local Authority administrative structures generally aren't appropriate to evaluate the capability and outcomes of Urban Design Consultant work as above and relate it local circumstances – for a variety of obvious reasons – importantly including means of ensuring the essential continuous interaction with the community. Therefore the structural and operational changes as proposed above i.e. - for Local Authorities to employ professional Community Development staff (linked with DP Planning Teams) and Councilors to have their own Community Development Advisory Group to work with them; could provide that different assurance.

3). The re- constructed State Department of Planning could additionally - by contractual agreement with other State Government instrumentalities similar to e.g. the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority, share some professional urban development design staff to supplement and share the number of directly employed special-purpose Planning Teams to operate on-call as required to do this work.

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4). Serious consideration should in future be given by the State Government assisting Local Authorities to identify and acquire land early for worthy community purposes by facilitating borrowing arrangements, to prevent land values escalating uncontrollably to community disadvantage as soon as district developments are identified for changes of use.

- 5). Different Residential Home Ownership and Development models should be researched and encouraged, to assist development of stable communities. Such as private Housing Cooperatives, Housing Associations and Share arrangements, and some with mixed tenure and ownership models. These would all both assist with affordability for young people, encourage design innovation and provide more flexibility for local neighbourhood exchange as families grow, extend, and needs change – while still for instance retaining local intergeneration kinship bonds, local identity and mixed social affordability where those traditions are culturally valued.
- 6). Transportation sharing already makes sense to many people today and likely to expand greatly in high-density urban areas – e.g. Lightweight portable low-speed power-assisted devices, bicycles, small electric and various forms of driverless vehicles. Importantly some of those will all require pre-planned parking, charging and storage locations.
- 7). New forms of integrated neighbourhoods will be developing. Decentralisation of shared office and small ‘workshop’ spaces should henceforth be included in those, to extend the use of evolving information technology and reduce the need for regular daily long distance home-to-work commuting. Many employers are already expecting a significant proportion of employees to be using remote ‘tele-working’ for their work.
- 8). Regarding efficient movement of people, rapid access to associated information, and operation of public services in cities is already being assisted elsewhere by incorporating smart technology in myriad different ways. Facilitation of that by incorporating smart technology thinking into urban planning and design will undoubtedly have beneficial effects on quality of urban living.
- 9). The future of high-density urban residential living does not necessarily need very tall multi-storey buildings. Many thoughtfully developed modern cities overseas manage to produce attractive inner suburban neighbourhoods with attractive shady and green landscaped areas and pedestrian dominated walkways and all essential convenience services within mainly 6 to 8 storey complexes. Such areas do however have to be professionally designed precincts and not be just unrelated ad hoc ‘infill’ buildings on cleared gap sites. (That unfortunately characterise some recent inner urban development permitted in the Perth region.)
- 10). Future multi-storey building forms are likely to make use of much larger off-site pre-assembled factory-made elements, at least core services units, but also complete dwellings – these have speed of construction advantages – but also can be thought of as more easily demountable as needs change.
- 11). Flexible re-assembly of internal elements and whole floor building spaces for different purposes can be pre-planned in buildings to increase their useful life and facilitate space-sharing. As well as structures with interchangeable ‘slot-in’ units for different purposes.

12). There will inevitably be a progressive change towards planning ‘people-first’ exclusive pedestrian realm movement areas as vehicles are ejected from sharing the same city area levels in new developments. This will also lead to much greater design flexibility to create freer-flowing pedestrian routes with shared ‘inter-penetrating’ public and semi-private spaces, creating different sequences of character, function ‘mood’ and sensory variation. (High-density living does require both quiet and formal outdoor spaces as well as ‘vibrancy’.)

13). Urban design that gives much more innovative attention to local climatic and micro-climatic factors is inevitable as energy and other resources conservation issues rise in significance. Also a necessary reduction in the ‘heat island’ effect of exposed hard surfaces in our local climate, will be driving more experimentation in use of recirculated irrigation for living green plant-material for roof spaces, shade and vertical gardens. Also, the variable local aerodynamic effect of diurnal wind turbulence amongst tall structures is a further challenging design issue for pedestrian circulation areas.

14). Regarding architectural building form, the progressive evolution of advanced building materials-science and structural engineering is leading to a modest breakaway from rectilinear forms that the traditional ‘post and beam’ structure has made structurally cheap and convenient for centuries. Curved building elements and indeed curvaceous whole buildings, sometimes of enormous scale have become structurally feasible. These may not only provide dramatic design effect, but also sometimes better reflect the way people naturally move and respond to spaces. Once we have dispensed with having to mix people with vehicular traffic that ‘prefers’ traditional linear urban layouts, it seems inevitable that both buildings and pedestrian routes can become much more attractively ‘fluid’ in the hands of creative professional architects and urban landscape designers.

15). Listening to people continuously will best guide the future of settlements and cities, whereby social interaction and quality of life can be purposefully enhanced for citizens of all ages and personal resources, through more intensely thoughtful and creative professional planning and design.

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